cosmic proportions

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cosmic proportions

by Anonymous

Summary

> “I mean it,” Carlos said. “We used to say it was better, no funny business during the season. At the end you were ready to burst out of your skull, but it helped with the driving. Good for focus.”
>
> Staring back at him, Junior didn’t say anything for a moment and then snorted.
>
> “Not even–” he made a lewd gesture and Carlos clucked his tongue in disapproval before nodding.

Notes

See the end of the work for notes

Junior got broken up with halfway through winter break and spent the following three weeks moping about it. Reyes had told Carlos he was supposed to be sympathetic about it, but when Junior's pre-season training camp was around the corner and he was still constantly sighing like an elderly dog, Carlos's patience was getting tested. This year was important–Junior knew that, but Carlos wondered if he *knew* it. So he got a few bottles of beer, a bucket of ice and lit the backyard fireplace. It only took half the bottle before Junior's eyes glazed over.

"Hey," Carlos said. "You're not thinking about that girl again, are you?"

Junior immediately got that kicked pet look and Carlos ground his teeth to stop himself from rolling his eyes.

"Carlito," he said. "You need to get your head on straight. Next year is–"

"Yes, yes," Junior said sourly and stared into the fire. The flickering light licked his face and instantly, Carlos could feel himself thaw. People said Junior was his exact replica, but Carlos knew better, saw the things he'd inherited from his mother: her intelligence, her dark eyes and, regretfully for him, her softness. He couldn't help this was his nature.

"Believe me," Carlos said. "This is for the best."

Junior made a non-committal noise and took a long swallow from his bottle, head thrown back, the long line of his throat bobbing.

"I mean it," Carlos said. "We used to say it was better, no funny business during the season. At the end you were ready to burst out of your skull, but it helped with the driving. Good for focus."

Staring back at him, Junior didn't say anything for a moment and then snorted.

"Not even–" he made a lewd gesture and Carlos clucked his tongue in disapproval before nodding.

"Not even that," Carlos said and Junior grimaced.

The first race ended with Albon in P10 and Junior half a second behind. Carlos scanned the top 10 for any outstanding investigations, but the result would probably stand. It was better than Carlos could have hoped for, so he was surprised when Junior was agitated.

"I could have had him," Junior said in his driver's room, grimacing as he bent down to untie his shoes. The first race of the season was always brutal on the body, so Carlos tapped the massage table and signaled Junior to sit. "If I hadn't wasted time behind–"

“Carlito,” Carlos said and lifted Junior’s foot to untie his laces and pull off his boot. “It’s a good result.”

“It’s not,” Junior snapped and when Carlos frowned at him, Junior shrank. “Sorry. It’s just–”

He rubbed his eyes and Carlos busied himself with his other shoe. From behind the safeguard of his hands, Junior said: “I followed your advice and it is–I can’t believe you used to do this for the entire season.”

“What advice?” Carlos said distractedly and Junior let out a wet laugh. Only then, he remembered. “Oh, you–oh, I see.”

“Three weeks,” Junior said. “And I’m–” he shuddered and Carlos grinned.

“It wasn’t the entire season,” he confided. “Just until summer break.”

Junior groaned and Carlos patted him on the ankle in sympathy.

The pointless streak ended after only two races, with some luck and an overtake that had Carlos’s heart rate spiking. Junior left Japan with two points and a smile that looked like it hurt his cheeks. Two more P10s followed in Sakhir and Jeddah but Miami ended with a mechanical DNF and Junior was back to sulking in the weekend he spent in Spain before leaving for Monaco.

“Did you pull a muscle?” Carlos heard Blanca ask and when Junior denied she explained: “You’re moving funny.”

Carlos stuck his head around the corner and indeed, Junior was walking a little bowlegged. After Blanca left, Carlos dropped an ice pack in Junior’s lap and Junior made a hunted noise before muttering his thanks.

Spain was glorious. Junior fought his way through the field and took the flag in P7, six points. Last year, he’d been devastated by P6–funny, how that worked. Albon took P10 and gritted his teeth through the double points celebration. He was a nice kid and Carlos liked him, but Carlos knew what happened to nice kids in this sport.

After the celebration, Carlos went to Junior’s drivers room and when he opened the door, Junior was lying on the massage table, flat on his back with his race suit peeled down to his waist. Legs bent at the knee, one of his arms flung over his eyes. The other hand was in his fireproofs.

“Carlos,” Carlos chided and Junior ripped his hand away with reflexes that would have made him a WDC in a Toro Rosso.

“I wasn’t–” he said, eyes wild. “I didn’t–”

“Here?” Carlos said, lowering himself on the uncomfortable couch. “Now?”

“I wasn’t,” Junior said and he sounded like he was about to cry. “It was just–it feels so bad.”

“And you think pawing at it is going to make it feel better?” Carlos said and Junior shook his head tightly.

“I was just–” he swallowed thickly as Carlos tried to swallow his annoyance. “Pressure. Nothing more.”

The silence between them stretched taut and Carlos reminded himself that Junior couldn’t help it. Usually he could withstand Carlos’s firm hand, but exert pressure on something fragile long enough and it’d shatter. Sometimes, he needed a gentle touch.

“Go on, then,” Carlos said and Junior said nothing for a long time before he tilted his head to the side.

“What?” he asked and Carlos held up his hand, fingers spread.

“Flat, don’t bend your fingers,” he said. “Just the weight of your hand, no extra pressure.”

“I can’t–” Junior said, a rare flash of outrage in his voice, but it suffocated the moment Carlos stood up. His big, wary eyes followed Carlos’s motions and Carlos clasped his hands behind his back.

“You deserve it today,” Carlos said and took care to keep his voice soft, as if he were talking to an animal he didn’t want to spook. Junior made a high sound and folded his arms over his face again. Carlos waited. He could see when Junior’s resolve crumbled, saw the muscle of his bicep bulging under the nomex as he flexed his arm and relaxed it indecisively. Slowly, his hand ran down his chest and paused against his midriff. Another deep breath before it drifted lower.

“Hold still,” Carlos said and Junior bit his lip and nodded. His eyes were closed. The only sound in the room was his ragged breathing. He wasn’t moving his hand, but that didn’t mean he was still. Carlos could see the stress in his body. His chest rose and fell in quick succession. His Adam’s apple kept jerking up whenever he swallowed. Carlos let him work through the agitation patiently. Junior’s hips twitched up against his flat palm. When Junior rocked his weight onto his heels, Carlos clucked his tongue and Junior froze.

“That’s enough, I think,” Carlos said and Junior swallowed again and slid his hand out of his fireproofs. “How are you feeling?”

Junior’s eyes were a bit glazed over and he blinked slowly.

“Better,” he said hoarsely. Carlos patted him on the knee and Junior flinched, but then the tension bled from his body.

“Get changed,” Carlos said. “I’m taking you and your team out for dinner”

A P8 finish in Spa brought Junior's tally to twenty-three points. Adding to it Albon’s eight points, it put Williams at a comfortable P6 in the Constructor’s, only two points behind Aston. The Hungaroring didn’t promise to be a great track for the Williams, but Carlos hoped they could pull off a miracle and enter the break in P5. When the journalists made their mid-season lists and the teams looked at their 2026 line-ups, they’d have no choice but to look at Junior, who bullied his unwieldy car around the track like a jockey, whipping it into shape. A year ago Carlos thought signing for Williams was a career death sentence and now: constant whispers around the paddock that if Junior could manage this in a Williams, who knows what he could have done with this year’s Ferrari. Pride burned hot in Carlos’s chest and he swept his son into a tight hug, kissed the top of his head.

“That was,” Carlos said into his sweaty mop of hair. “A champion’s race.”

“Papa,” Junior said and he clutched at the back of Carlos’s jacket. “I can’t–”

“It was,” Carlos said and Junior squirmed in his arms.

“No,” Junior said and he sounded panicked. “I mean–you have to–”

When Junior wriggled again, Carlos felt what he meant, poking hard into his hip. On instinct, he curled his arm around Junior’s back and held him tighter as Junior struggled. Carlos squeezed his hand around the back of Junior’s neck and a choked sound ripped out of Junior’s chest.

“Breathe,” he said and Junior made a small, keening noise. “Calm down.”

Junior was shaking all over and Carlos gripped the hair at the back of his head and held him still.

“You have to calm down, or the cameras will see,” Carlos said, voice steady and Junior nodded frantically. He was still trembling and Carlos stroked down the stretch of his neck and back up. “Easy, easy. Breathe in, breathe out. You alright?”

Junior shuddered a last time and then nodded. When he stepped back, he looked every bit the racing driver Carlos knew he was. Fast, strong, handsome. Composed.

“That’s it,” Carlos said and tapped Junior’s cheek. Junior closed his eyes and tipped his face into Carlos’s palm for a fraction of a second, before he straightened his shoulders and went into the media pen.

The first night of the summer break, Carlos lit the fire pit again and handed Junior a beer. Neither of them acknowledged Junior squirming in his chair as they talked over the first half of the season. When dusk fell, Carlos went inside to swap out the empty beer bottles for full ones. Junior was staring into the fire when Carlos came back, leg wiggling restlessly.

He startled when Carlos stood behind his chair and laid a hand on his shoulder.

“Have you already–” Carlos asked and he could see the flush rocket up the side of Junior’s neck.

“No,” he said, voice squeaky and Carlos chuckled.

“Alright, go on then,” he said and Junior laughed nervously. Then, after Carlos didn’t reply, he said: “I can’t–that’s–” he sputtered for a few more seconds before he finally settled on “we’re outside.”

“Okay,” Carlos said and went to move away, but Junior said: “Wait.”

The back of his neck was brick-red when he bent forward a little. He was breathing hard. Carlos left his hand on Junior’s shoulder, heavy but still and he waited patiently. Minutes passed before something happened, but then the rustle of fabric was audible and Junior whimpered. Carlos could only see Junior’s back shifting under the thin fabric of his shirt, the slow, furtive movement of his elbow. Junior let out a near-hysterical giggle and then a drawn-out groan. He could hear the slide of wet skin, Junior’s punched out breaths. Under his hand, the muscle in Junior’s shoulder jumped.

The movement of his arm quickened and Carlos pressed his thumb into the muscle of Junior’s trap. A gasp followed, then a groan and Junior curled in on himself.

“That’s it,” Carlos said. He patted Junior’s shoulder and Junior made a wretched, punched out sound. “You deserved this.”

“Thank you,” Junior choked out and Carlos stepped away. For a long moment, Junior stayed where he was, folded awkwardly over himself and then he stood up jerkily, went inside. Carlos uncapped a beer for him and set it on the arm of his chair, then got one for himself and took a long swig before he leaned back into his chair.

End Notes

Title from Katherine Angel's *Daddy Issues*, "...the father swollen to cosmic proportions".

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